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CIA joins corporate recruiters seeking Stanford grads

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STANFORD — Handing out their slick brochures and signing up students for interviews, they looked like the hundreds of other recruiters who come to Stanford University every year.

But there was one big difference about the six men and women speaking enthusiastically about "rewarding professional careers" in the student union yesterday: they were recruiters from the CIA.

"We fulfill a vital role for America, and we're looking for the caliber of people we need to carry out our mission," Bob Magee, the agency's personnel director, told a gathering of about 60 students.

"People are our most precious resource," added Keith Hansen, another CIA recruiter.

As they spoke, students in the back of the room hissed and held up banners that read "CIA out of Nicaragua, CIA out of Stanford" and "CIA Murderers."

Other students snacked on donuts and coffee and picked up glossy brochures illustrated with aerial surveillance photographs of Cuban missile sites and political parades in Moscow.

The recruiters told them that working for the CIA has some unusual requirements but that it certainly has its rewards.

"You're never going to be a millionaire, and if public recognition is important to you, don't apply," Magee said, "but job satisfaction in this agency is very high."

He explained that spies working for the CIA are "just like you and me — they're not the glamorous figures you see on TV."

Some agents, the recruiters said, spend much of their time monitoring

foreign radio broadcasts, television shows and newspapers. Others help recruit networks of foreign nationals to supply information.

Recruiter Paul Thompson told engineering students in the audience that the agency pushes the state-of-the-art in their field by building its own spy satellites, miniature cameras and high-altitude aircraft.

"Those who work for us experience technology at its best," he said.

Potential recruits were told that they someday may get to participate in "covert actions," which Magee defined as "exercising influence around the world in ways not attributable to the U.S."

"It's used in some places more than others," he said. "Generally I'd say that we do it quite well."

Working for the CIA, students were told, is not only professionally challenging and rewarding, but often fun. The agency has the lowest turnover rate in the federal government.

"As large bureaucracies go, I believe ours is the most personal and caring," Hansen said.

After the presentation, a number of students said they were impressed and intrigued enough to look into the matter further. They snatched up leaflets listing job opportunities for majors in engineering, computer science, economics, political science and business.

"Sure, I'd consider working for them. I'm a patriot, and I support my country," said Kamela Arya, a 20-year-old junior majoring in mechanical engineering.

"They may do things that are wrong, but without them I don't think the president could deal with the magnitude of problems going on," Arya said. "I'm sure there are bad things they do, but what about all the good things?"

Others, though, came to the recruiting session to protest the CIA's involvement in Nicaragua and Third World countries.

At a rally before the recruiting session, they passed out leaflets accusing the CIA of overthrowing or attempting to overthrow governments in Iran,

Guatemala, Cuba, Chile, Vietnam, Congo, Ghana and Nicaragua.

Other fliers accused the agency of engaging in murder, psychological warfare, torture, assassination and economic destabilization.

Steve Babb, a 25-year-old graduate student in political science, said he spent the summer in Nicaragua and saw people killed and maimed in the CIA-sponsored war at the nation's northern frontier.

"Do you feel that what the CIA is doing there is a legitimate defense of the United States' security interests?" he asked Magee. "Is it in keeping with American ideals? Is it moral?"

Magee shrugged his shoulders.

"That's a policy question," he said. "We don't deal with policy."